



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

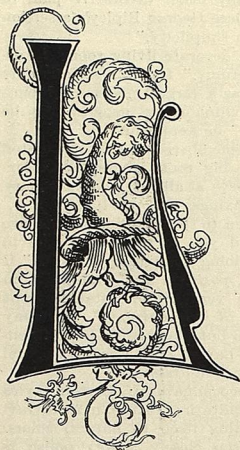


## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

### COLOR IN DECORATION.

BY HENRY W. FISCHER.

(First Paper.)



wool present this appearance. When viewed from a greater distance, the interwoven decorations or figures afford the pleasing effect. It is the same with a white wall—to be pleasing to the eye in all ways, it must be sanded, or made otherwise slightly uneven, to the close observer; but it must be equipped with pictures, or finished with panels, to have a good general effect.

And the same prevails with colored objects; for instance, there is a buffet case in gold brown color; standing near it the eye is filled and pleased with the figures and fibres in the wood, which afford the variation in color. We step back a few feet and the pleasing effect comes from the lights and shades of the various ornaments. Stepping back further, say fifteen feet, these lights became dimmer, but as the shades increase in the same proportion, the general effect on the eye is not materially changed.

It is evident, then, that figures in wall paper must not be too obtrusive in color, when the wall is decorated with pictures, vases and other heavier ornaments. On the other hand, it is superfluous, and shows bad taste, to plaster decorations on a *gobelin*, representing a continuous picture; as the lights and shades of that picture suffice for the wanted variety of color. If you wish to bring out the full effect of the fold in a curtain, you must not select, as the material a highly decorated texture; as this is apt to interfere with the look of plasticity. If you do not want to take a plain fabric, prefer one with geometrical figures to one with figures from the animal or botanical worlds. It is very bad taste to distort animated figures, as it must necessarily be done in the fold of a curtain; and it is the acme of decorative debauchery to use a *gobelin* for curtain folds, as there is bound to be an indiscriminate chaos of disconnected legs, arms and other members, in defiance of every law of harmony.

If we reflect on the historical progress of inner color decorations, in the last two centuries, we may easily define two categories as far as the general impression goes; the room with a subdued tone of color, which does not exclude any color entirely, and the room with very light color effects, in its entirety softened by a certain fundamental tint.

In the first room we observe the greatest freedom in the distribution of colors, up to a certain limit. Every piece of decoration, or furniture, is allowed to retain an almost independent individuality of color.

In the second, or light room, strong contrasts in color are not admitted. Everything moves in one direction—Art, yes. Nature itself, has to submit to certain prescriptions which heighten the one color effect. Walls, doors and furniture, all have the same color; portieres, curtains, and carpets have to follow suit. To be in perfect harmony, even the portraits and landscapes must conform to the same principal.

The matter of general suitability of color, however, does not, in these two cases, stop with the furnishings and fitting of these rooms. It even extends to the attire of those who occupy them.

The ladies who revel in the strong, tints and shades of the first room, may garb themselves in bright red, if it so pleases them, or in the more majestic royal purple of ancient lyre; and, in so doing add harmoniously to the general effect, rather than clash with it.

But they, the office of whose charms is to idealize the light room, are confronted with many, and very pronounced, barriers, in the realm of color-laws, which they cannot pass. They can scarcely wear anything else than pale pinks, delicate shades of lilac, or dim suggestions of straw and human color, without throwing the whole interior effect into something distracting and repulsive.

The true significance of "color-clash" is well exemplified when a person dressed in ebon crape enters a room whose pre-

dominating hue will not stand this heavy sombreness. There is, instantly, a cessation of the fun and mirth which a moment ago prevailed, and without any one knowing exactly why.

There is either an "unnamed sense," or an unclassified development of the accepted senses, in every refined person, which challenges incongruity of color. And it is this which makes em-



SUGGESTIONS FOR FRIEZES, BORDERS, ETC., FROM LINEN TISSUES, FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO SEVENTEENTH CENTURIES.



## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

phatic enforcement of the principle that dress, as much as fixed decorative paraphernalia, must be considered if the demonstration of correct taste is aimed at.

Cognizance must also be taken of the general color-laws in nature. In this, it will be seen that though there are many brilliantly plumed birds, and gorgeously hued flowers, and, also, an abundance of black and awful shadows, the distribution of the latter is so wonderfully planned that there is never a clash between light and shadow, or between color and its opposite.

The only exception to this is when man, with an unpardonable disregard of taste and harmony, imports into some unintended clime, specimens of plant and animal life which belong in some other land, where there are vastly different conditions. It is then that imharmonious contrast offends the eye, and the cultured color-instinct rebels against lawless and unnecessary abuse.

The technical term for white decoration is "Isochromy," which has its own grammar and logic, the latter being in many cases practically different from the regular science of colors.

It had its systematic development in the eighteenth century, while there are numerous and splendid examples of it which date back into the two preceding centuries.

Monarchy, which has done so much for the promotion and welfare of art in other fields, has extended the same fastening care to white decoration; and so the present favor with which "rococo," or white furniture, is held, is another "gracious tribute to the sovereignty of kings."

This monarchical leaning towards "Isochromy" had its origin with the decorative fashions prevailing among the castles and chateaus of princes and nobles, where, first, there was generally a succession of rooms in colors, running from gaudy showiness to occasional lapses into neutral tints. Following along the chain-like course of these, one would suddenly burst in upon a grand *salon*, of either white or silver, and wholly minus any other color.

The restful elegance of this, after the glaring and redundant hues of the preceding rooms, would now have a greater charm and fascination than might otherwise have been the case aside from its own undeniably rich, rare merit.

The ball-room, where "Isochromy" prevails, heightens the brilliancy of diamonds and jewels, and lends to even the superbest costumes a richness and otherwise unattainable. And this, since glitter and show are among the chief attributes of royalty, affords a sufficient reason for its having won such marked royal preferment.

The costliest of all decorative schemes, it was, indeed, befitting that it should, in those days, have been reserved for final and crowning effects. And the same holds good now.

In ball-rooms, because of the abundance of lights and the variety of costumes, its power is most telling and supreme. In olden times, too, when wax candles, alone, did light-giving service, it was, also a matter of economy.

It has been charged that white decoration has an effeminate tendency; but this is only true in respect to ball-rooms, and the like, where the sole purpose is to show ladies and gentlemen at their best, in manner, in dress, in every thing.

Aside from this, is the fact which science teaches that it

gives the eye more "work" than any other decorative plan or system: a proof, as it were, of the late George Ripley's assertion that "there is most complication in simplicity."

It is not, of course, practical to decorate living rooms in accordance with the laws of "Isochromy," for this style is only practical and effective where one has a large number of rooms, where the variations of color-individuality in general may be preserved, and the one "best room" be kept white.

"Isochromy," it must also be remembered, is only calculated to awake a striking display in some big room where lavish furnishing is possible. It would not serve at all well as an auxiliary of mean or common furniture and fixings.

In living rooms, it should be seen to that the decorations are neither monotonous or garish; and yet, it must be borne in mind that whoever thinks he is doing something "stylish" if he selects all his furniture, carpets, *portieres* and wall-paper, in one single shade and color, makes a very great mistake, except in the case of carrying out the plan of "Isochromy." Harmony of color, which is not only desirable but mandatory, is not identical with sameness, any more than having one's wearing apparel made of fine goods constitutes being well-dressed.

It is an error to pronounce rococo unnatural. Certain styles of it have gone so far as to attempt imitating Nature, in its extravagant forms, and even to assimilating itself to natural colors. For instance, in following such forms closely, a wax polish is used, preserving, thus, the natural wood colors.

For all that, there was a certain monotony in this colored, or "often" rococo, inasmuch as one color necessarily prevailed; and while this principle was admirable so long as it was confined to white, or silver, it grew wearisome when allowed to embrace other colors.

One telling blow, struck against this, was the sudden, enthusiastic, and extended use of leather, corresponding with wood colors. Dark colors in this are now almost banished, as well as in wood itself.

"Polychromy"—the use of many colors—is in strict accordance with good taste, so far as floors and ceilings go, as the eye only lightly scans these, and never continuously. But quieter color effects should alone be used, in the direct line of sight, as the sides of walls and such furniture as is far enough above the floor and below the ceiling as to be most naturally within the full radius of the eye.

The colors most easy and beneficial to the eye are brown, brown-red, green, green-brown, yellow, and yellow-white; and so these, of course, should always form the basis of general decorative schemes.

The perfect consistency of color combinations, in a room, is of the utmost importance; and in the selection of colors, it must be decided, beforehand, whether the room in consideration is to be used in the day-time, or at night; as the best and most artistic effect cannot be suited to daylight and lamplight, both.

Ball-rooms, theatres, and *salons*, are decorated according to this maxim, and why should not the mistress of a household do the same?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



CERAMIC FRIEZE, BY CHARLES VOLKMAR.